

Forest Plan Revision Recreation Opportunity Settings FAQs

The recreation community has raised questions and concerns about how the Recreation Opportunity Settings (ROS) direction in the draft plan compares to the 1983 forest plan direction, as well as to past and current inventories. Here are some frequently asked questions and answers.

Because of the good questions raised by the motorized community, we discovered a number of errors in our Draft Plan and Draft EIS that were confusing. These FAQs are intended to clarify our intent.

Why does a ROS setting allocation matter?

- A ROS setting for an area sets the stage for future kinds of development, including types of trails (motorized or nonmotorized).
- It also helps recreation managers address visitor capacities.
- Primitive settings occur primarily in designated wilderness. In the GMUG draft plan, both semi-primitive allocations ensure areas will remain less developed, and potentially host fewer visitors at one time than the more developed roaded natural and rural settings. Semi-primitive nonmotorized allocations ensure there will be no future motorized routes/areas, while semi-primitive motorized allocations allow future motorized routes/areas to be considered.



Mountain biker. USDA Forest Service photo by Bob Wick

What are the different ROS categories?

These are some of the simple characteristics of each of the ROS categories. More detailed setting characteristics are located in the Draft Plan, starting on PDF pg. 75.

ROS CATEGORY	Distance from motorized routes/areas	Access	Size	Facilities
Primitive (usually wilderness)	> 3 miles from motorized route/area	Foot/horse only in wilderness	> 5,000 acres	None
Semi-primitive nonmotorized	> ½ mile from motorized route/area	No motorized. Generally winter ungroomed, marked.	> 2,500 acres	Low level development
Semi-primitive motorized	> ½ mile from level 3-5 roads (up to passenger roads). High-clearance 4WD (Level 2) roads present.	Motorized. Generally winter ungroomed, marked.	> 2,500 acres	Low level development
Roaded Natural	< ½ mile from level 3-5 roads	Passenger roads. Winter plowed, groomed.	N/A	Higher level development
Rural	< ½ mile from level 3-5 roads	Passenger roads. Winter resorts.	N/A	Most developed

What is the difference between a ROS inventory and ROS allocations?

- A ROS inventory is an assessment of current recreation settings, as modeled based on distance from existing routes and then improved with staff and public input. It is a snapshot in time based on the model at the time and the routes in existence at that time.
- By contrast, ROS allocations are made within a forest plan – for the GMUG draft plan, ROS allocations allow for different levels of development and types of trails in different areas.

Comparison of ROS inventories and allocations, 1983 forest plan and 2021 draft plan

	Inventoried in 1983	Allocated in 1983	Inventoried Today	Proposed ROS Allocations – Draft Alternatives		
				Alt. B	Alt. C	Alt.D
Primitive	7%	11%	15%	11%	11%	27%
Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized	27%	9%	45%	47%	37%	32%
Semi-Primitive Motorized	42%	13%	26%	28%	32%	23%
Roaded Natural	21%	2% ¹	14%	14%	20%	18%
Rural	1%	N/A ¹	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
Prescription of R/RN – SPNM²	N/A	62% ²	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

¹ The 1983 forest plan combined rural and roaded natural into one Management Area – 2B, so the 2% represents the cumulative acres of both ROS zones.

² The non-specific prescription of “R/RN-SPNM” in the 1983 plan covered the categories of R, RN, SPM, SPNM. There is no internal agreement as to what this meant for an area nor how it was to be implemented to maintain recreation settings over time.

The inventory conducted in 1983 and the current inventory are very different, as you can see in the above table. What accounts for those differences?

The inventories’ results are very different and comparing them is like comparing apples to oranges. There are three primary reasons the inventoried/modeled settings have shifted over time:

- The parameters for the inventory have changed and our ability to model is now much more precise.
- Individual travel management decisions have occurred across the Forest in the past 37 years that have changed the level of development on the landscape; the settings we experience. Again, these decisions have not changed the ROS allocations for an area, but they have resulted in changes to on-the-ground settings that are reflected in today’s ROS inventory.
- In the 1983 forest plan, 62% of the forest had non-specific ROS allocations. An inventoried semi-primitive area could become more developed over time or an inventoried motorized area could become more nonmotorized over time. There wasn’t a

complete vision for recreation management in these parts of the forest.

The biggest apparent shifts between the 1983 and 2021 inventory have occurred in the areas modeled as semi-primitive non-motorized (increase of 18%) and areas modeled as semi-primitive motorized (decrease of 16%).

Will a forest plan nonmotorized allocation result in closing existing motorized routes or areas?

- The forest plan will NOT close existing routes or areas.
- Area-wide travel management is not part of the forest plan. And it’s also almost complete on the forest. The only exception is winter travel management for Gunnison, where we really are trying to build a new vision for future management. Because most travel management is complete, we are generally not in the business of closing more areas or trails. But we do get a lot of proposals for new trails to consider.
- The importance of the motorized and nonmotorized settings in the draft plan is about future, new trails, and about future winter travel management in Gunnison. We ask that you be forward thinking and strategic – for example, where is it important to you to maintain or expand the future opportunity to build a new trail, or to maintain or expand OSV access?

What kinds of comments are most useful?

- If you see something on the maps that doesn’t make sense, for example because of something mapped as nonmotorized where there are existing motorized uses or trails, let us know – we want to get them right.
- We want to be strategic about future recreation management. Your place-based comments will be most helpful when we refine a final map.
- Where do you want future opportunities? Where do you want to maintain or expand current access, current motorized areas, current nonmotorized areas? Draw these areas on the maps.

We invite the public to review the draft plan and provide comments by Nov. 12. Comments may be submitted at http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/gmug/forestplan_comments

For more information, visit <http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/DraftForestPlan> or contact the planning team at SM.FS.gmugplanning@usda.gov.